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ABSTRACT

The format of the Instruction Dialogue Author Facility (IDAF) computer program has been applied to teaching clause analysis in college writing classes. The IDAF program exercises a great deal of control over a writing student's progression through lessons. Each of the writing lessons consists of one or more exchanges between the instructor and the student. The IDAF program also stores statistics on individual lessons and permits instructors to revise lessons or to append materials for students with special needs. The format of the lessons is clause analysis, reflecting theory and practice related to tagmemic analysis. To encourage the composition process on the computer, students are asked to make use of subordinators to create complex and compound-complex sentences. Through this clause analysis approach to writing, students understand the options they have in creating their writing styles, options ranging from the centrality of the verb to the structure of information in cumulative or periodic sentence structures. Further, these students begin to see how to expand informational content by yoking closely related thoughts together by adding words or clauses that modify, explain, describe, or add details to propositions. (Appendixes provide examples from the lessons in the program.) (RL)

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DEVELOPING STYLISTIC AWARENESS ON THE COMPUTER: A TAGMEMIC APPROACH

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The typical college composition instructor often wrestles with the problem of time. On the one hand, he is concerned with how much time he should allot per semester to teach rhetorical modes and analyze written samples to develop students' awareness of prose organization. On the other hand, he is concerned with how much time he should allot to teach grammar and sentence structure to develop students' awareness of and experimentation with syntactic variation. To free some of the instructor's time from grammar and sentence structure instruction so that he can devote more classroom hours to the discussion of strategies of organization, this past year I have been developing a computerized programmed text using the Hewlett-Packard IDAF (Instructional Dialogue Author Facility), consisting of a series of chain questions with appropriate branches and loops. The core grammatical system around which this program is organized, to assist students in developing awareness of stylistic versatility, is clause analysis: students learn to recognize and experiment w th the form and function of clauses--the largest building blocks of sentences. Development of this program is being supported by the University of Wisconsin Undergraduate Teaching Improvement Grant and by a grant from the University of Wisconsin-Parkside's Center for the Application of Computers. To explain this program, I will describe the format of the IDAF program and the format of the clause analysis program I fed into this Hewlett-Packard system.

The Hewlett-Packard IDAF Program

At the time of my decision to write a computer program, the University of Wisconsin-Parkside had bought the Hewlett-Packard IDAF Program. Aside from this economic consideration, the IDAF format seemed an acceptable means into which I could feed my sequence of stylistic patterns. Also, the programmer is able to

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exercise a great deal of control over a student's progression.

A lesson consists of one or more exchanges between the instructor (author) and the student; these exchanges fall into smaller structural units called sections. In a section the instructor gives information (text), asks questions, and provides appropriate responses to a student's answers. The instructor may also provide hints and replies to unexpected answers (for format, see Appendix A). If a student has not given the correct answer after a given number of trials, the instructor may decide to give the student a final message (the correct answer and the reason for the correct answer). On the basis of student performance, the instructor may send a student to another part of a lesson or to a remedial lesson. My program incorporates remedial lessons which are also used to assist students who do not place into our standard composition courses.

The IDAF also stores statistics on individual lessons, and it can record student responses; thus, it is possible to revise dialogue or to append material if students are not performing well in a lesson. With ease other instructors may insert questions and correct or incorrect responses (answer groups) to modify the program for their students' needs by making use of the so-called Utility Mode in IDAF. This provision certainly adds to the program's versatility--one does not need to know the intricacies of computer programming to work with the program.

A Tagmemic Program on IDAF

Because clauses are the largest functional components of a sentence and operate at the sentence level, I chose the tagmemic approach of clause analysis as the basis for the presentation of sentence structure and stylistic variation. In clause analysis, the verb is viewed as central to the clause, as well as to the sentence; therefore, recognition of sentence forms (transitive, intransitive, equational, or passive) is based on developing the student's ability to identify the main verb phrase in main and dependent clauses. According to Cook (Introduction to Tagmemic Analysis), partial clause structures (an infinitive or participle, expanded with objects or modifiers) are also classified as dependent clauses.

My program initially requires students to be able to distinguish main clauses from any other groups of words. Thus, emphasis is placed first on a student's ability to recognize complete expressions of ideas or thoughts or descriptions, as opposed to fragmentary ones. Instead of discussing words as separate entities, the program begins by making students aware of the relationships that must be established in a clause in order for communication between the writer and reader to occur: there must be named an agent or actor or recipient of an action; and there must be stated possession, location, condition, and physical or experiential action. (According to Cook, "experiential verbs" are those which express sensation, emotion, or cognition.) Appendix B illustrates one type of recognition drill in which the student is asked to identify a main clause expressing physical action.

Since there are only four possible clause types in English, all clauses (main,as well as dependent) are necessarily labeled as either transitive, intransitive, equational, or passive. My program discusses the structural differencesamong these clause types. For example, the transitive clause is goal-directed: there is a recipient of an action or process. The intransitive clause may express complete predication,as in, "She is laughing," or it may take an adverb, as in, "She is laughing loudly." Identification of clause types requires, then, that students recognize the form of the clauses (transitive, intransitive, equational, passive), as well as the conditions or processes expressed in clauses. In Appendix C, students are asked to determine which transitive main clause expresses mental process, as opposed to possession or physical action. Lessons such as this are designed to encourage students' awareness of the meaning conveyed through verb choice. For example, there is a difference between saying, "There is smoke in the room" and "Smoke permeates the room." The first main clause (an equational clause) expresses static description; the second (a transitive clause), process description. Throughout, I am concerned with the form and meaning of clauses.

Once a student has mastered the recognition of main clauses according to their form and meaning, he is ready for the next

stylistic level--the identification of both the form and function of dependent clauses. At this level the student advances from working with simple sentence structures (simple and compound sentences) to more structurally complex sentences (complex and compound-complex). Although dependent clauses are like main clauses in their subject-verb core and can be labeled as transitive, intransitive, equational, or passive, they have the additional ability of assuming nominal, adjectival, or adverbial functions in sentences(Appendix D lists these dependent clause functions).

Each of the lessons in this level of the program deals with the individual functions of dependent clauses in sentences. For example, one lesson (Appendix A) discusses the nominal function of dependent clauses and lists those subordinating conjunctions which introduce nominal dependent clauses. In this section all questions following the text ask students to identify the nominal dependent clauses which act as subjects of sentences. A similar format is used to measure students' abilities to determine the other nominal dependent clause functions, such as direct object. In Appendix E students are asked to determine which adverbial dependent clause suggests simultaneity of action (as opposed to cause, for example).

To encourage the composition process on the computer, students are asked to make use of subordinators to create complex and compound-complex sentences. I provide them with simple sentences and ask them to make complex sentences, using specified subordinating conjunctions. In Appendix F,I ask the student to subordinate sentence 1 ("She is guilty") to sentence 2 ("It is obvious"), using "that"; thus, the resulting complex sentence begins with a nominal dependent clause,"That she is guilty." Successive exercises in composing illustrate how sentence content is lengthened by adding clauses which modify, explain, describe, or add details or supportive material to increase specificity in sentences. Other exercises illustrate how sentence length can be reduced by deletion of subordinators or repetitive connectors. Emphasis is placed on variation in sentence length--how information is unraveled in cumulative and periodic sentence structures.

Through this clause analysis approach to writing, I believe students understand the options they can choose among as writers, ranging from the centrality of the verb to the structure of information in cumulative or periodic sentence structures. Further, they begin to see how to expand informational content by yoking closely related thoughts together by adding words or clauses which modify, explain, describe, or add details to propositions.

Those students who have been through the program as it was being written have commented on the effectiveness of this alternative method of instruction. One, it allows them to go through exercises at their own pace (they enter and proceed through the lessons according to their individual abilities); and,two, they receive immediate feedback about their choices, as opposed to the waiting period which exists when the instructor collects exercises and marks them. Many students proceed through the entire program quickly, skipping exercises they do not need to push themselves through, but might well "have to do" in the traditional classroom approach.

The movement to the level of composition on the computer terminal is certainly the direction in which I would like to develop the present program. In the existing format, students deal with composition only at the one-or two-sentence level. Ideally, the student should be able to work with a paragraph, so that he can decide how his propositions would be ordered and how his sentence structures would relate sequentially. Thus, my goal is to develop this program into one in which the student could experiment with generating paragraphs--given a certain number of propositions.

APPENDIX A

Style 11 (Nominal Dependent Clauses)

TEXT: Now that you understand how dependent clauses are linked to main clauses, we can discuss the functions dependent clauses have in sentences. One function is nominal: dependent clauses may act as nouns (subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, appositives objects of prepositions, subject and object complements). Certain subordinating conjunctions signal nominal dependent clauses. These are as follows:

who	how
whom(ever)	what(ever)
which(ever)	
that	
where	
when	
why	

Look at this sentence: (THAT HE IS GUILTY) IS OBVIOUS. The dependent clause is a nominal clause introduced by the subordinating conjunction "that." This entire dependent clause functions as the subject of "is" just as "The children" is the subject of the verb "are" in "THE CHILDREN ARE GUILTY."

QUESTION: What is the nominal dependent clause in the following sentence: WHAT HE TOLD HER IS A LIE.

CORRECT ANSWER GROUP: WHAT HE TOLD HER

REPLY FOR THIS GROUP: YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT! This is a nominal dependent clause functioning as the subject of the verb "is."

WRONG ANSWER GROUPS

WHAT
WHAT HE
WHAT HE TOLD
HE,HER
TOLD
IS
IS A
IS A LIE
IS A LIE.
LIE

Reply to Wrong Answers: Type out the complete dependent clause which acts as a noun.

REPLY TO UNEXPECTED ANSWER: Type out the complete nominal dependent clause with its subject-verb core and complement.

HINT: Look for one of the subordinating conjunctions which introduces a noun clause (who, whom(ever), which(ever), that,how,what, where, when, why) and its subject-verb core and complement.

FAILURE MESSAGE: "WHAT HE TOLD HER" is the subject of the verb"IS." "WHAT" is the subordinating conjunction introducing the dependent nominal clause"HE TOLD HER."

APPENDIX B

QUESTION: Let's try one more. Which one of the following groups of words expresses physical action in a main clause?

(1) Running down the street.
(2) The robber is running down the street.
(3) The robber down the street.

Correct Answer Group

(2)

Reply for this Group: Yes, this expresses physical action in a grammatically complete thought. We know who is acting and what his action is.

Wrong Answer Groups and Replies:

(1) Wrong! We do not know who is running.

(3) Wrong! We do not know what physical action the robber is performing.

Reply to Unexpected Answer:

Type the number of the group of words which expresses physical action in a main clause.

Hint: Look closely at the groups of words. Is there an actor and do we know what action he is performing?

Failure Message:

Recall that in main clauses expressing physical action there must be named a performer and his action. The correct answer is (2) The robber (performer) is running (action) down the street.

APPENDIX C

Style 4 (Transitive Clauses Expressing Mental Process)

Question: Which one of the following transitive clauses expresses a mental process?

(1) She owns a new condominium.

(2) He considered the man's sound advice.

(3) The child hit his playmate.

Correct Answer Group: (2)

Reply for this Group: Correct. "Considered" is a transitive verb taking the direct object "advice" and expressing a mental process.

Wrong Answer Group #1: (1)

Reply for this Group: No. "Owns" expresses possession.

Wrong Answer Group #2: (3)

Reply for this Group: No. "Hit" expresses physical action.

Reply to Unexpected Answer: Type the number of the transitive clause which expresses mental process.

Hint: A mental process verb is one which expresses action taking place in one's mind, as in, "I doubt the accuracy of that statement."

Failure Message: The correct answer is (2), because "considered" expresses action taking place in the mind. "Owns" expresses possession and "hit" expresses physical action.

APPENDIX D

Labels to mark dependent clauses according to their function:

Nominals:	Adverbials:
Subject of Verb	Time
Subject Complement	Manner
Direct Object	Location
Indirect Object	Purpose
Object Complement	Cause
Object of Preposition	Result
Head Word Appositive	Concession
Adjectivals	Comparison
	Condition

APPENDIX E

Question: Which one of the following adverbial dependent clauses expresses simultaneity of action?

(1) As he entered the room, the crowd stared.

(2) Because he entered the room, the crowd stared.

Correct Answer Group: (1)

APPENDIX F

QUESTION: Making use of the subordinating conjunction "that," subordinate sentence (1) to sentence (2), so that the resulting complex sentence begins with a nominal dependent clause:

(1) She is guilty. (2) It is obvious.

CORRECT ANSWER GROUP:
That she is guilty is obvious.